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Scale How, Ambleside, UK, 2009

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ment (saving an enterprise by the writer, started about 1886) are utterly oblivious to the danger and to our duty alike.

When the highest, when the supreme and only authorities have finally, explicitly and categorically declared by unanimous resolution, "That the hygienic advantages of vertical writing have been clearly demonstrated, and established both by medical investigation and practical experiment;" and that "it is hereby recommended that upright penmanship be introduced and generally taught in our elementary and secondary schools," surely it is time for us all to join the crusade and enlist our powers in the promotion of that system of handwriting which is at once easiest to read, write, learn and teach, and which in every aspect possesses a monopoly of merit and advantages, hygienic, educational and practical.

The full text of the paper and resolution, together with the report *in extenso* by the Commission of Medical Experts to the Imperial and Royal Supreme Council of Hygiene, Vienna 1891, can be had on application to Messrs. Sampson Low, Marston & Co., Ltd., St. Dunstan's House, Fetter Lane, London, E.C.

THE CHILDREN'S HOUR.

THOSE HOLY FIELDS:*

BEING SUNDAY EVENING THOUGHTS FOR OUR CHILDREN
CONCERNING

"Those holy fields,
Over whose acres walked those blessed feet
Which eighteen hundred years ago were nailed,
For our advantage, to the bitter cross."

BY THE REV. C. H. CHASE.

I.

THE OLD MOSQUE.

"Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom."
Psalm cxlv. 13.

AFTER a long weary drive of seventy miles, what is this beautiful city which bursts upon us surrounded with orchards? This is Damascus. Here is the River Abana, yonder to the south is Pharpar, and over there is snowy Hermon. We are just entering one of the oldest cities in the world. You remember Abraham's faithful steward once lived here. What is that long building with those minarets, like little church spires? That is a Moslem mosque. The Moslems, or Mohammedans, do not believe in our dear Lord Jesus as God the Saviour. Their little girls are very ignorant, and hardly ever go to school, and when they go out in the streets their faces are all covered, so that no

* Having had the great happiness of a ride through the Holy Land, I write these short papers with the hope that they may make some dear children happier on Sunday evenings, and help them to picture more perfectly the scenes of Holy Scripture.

one may look at them. This building has a wonderful history. On the same place where it now stands stood the Temple of the Sun God Rimmon where Naaman worshipped; then a Greek temple, and after that a Roman temple. At last the Christians built a church, and worshipped as you and I do. But the Moslems drove the Christians away, and turned the church into a mosque, or temple of their own.

On the wall high up outside there is a very strange writing in Greek. The words, put into English, are these:

"Thy kingdom, O Christ, is an everlasting kingdom, and Thy dominion endureth throughout all ages."

The letters were, of course, carved when the building was a Christian church. I wonder if the Moslems know they are there, or whether, when they do know, they will destroy them.

However this may be, the truth remains; the kingdom of Jesus is *for ever*. Dear child, you and I belong to this kingdom. We are "Members of Christ." We belong to Jesus; we are part of His body the Church. Have you ever seen the Queen? would you not like to see her, and to hear her speak to you? You belong to her; you are her subject.

It will be better still, far better, to see the King Jesus, to hear Him call you by name. You belong to *Him*: you are His subject.

Ask your King to make you loyal to Him, true to Him; ask Him to fill your heart with His love; and when you say, "Our Father, Thy kingdom come," ask to be made worthier of your King—obedient to His laws—thoughts, wishes, plans all just as He would have them. Then some day you shall see the Head, once crowned with thorns, crowned with glory.

Do not forget the many many children in Damascus and all over the world who know not your King, who have never even heard His Name. Ask that they may know Christ. So shall His kingdom come; and His dominion—that is, His rule—be throughout all ages. What joy to have helped on that glorious reign, to have extended the kingdom of our King.

"He is my Lord! oh, I am glad of this,
So glad that Thou art Master, Sovereign, King!
And this is peace, such peace, I hardly pause
To look beyond to all the coming joy
And glory of Thy full and visible reign.
Thou reignest now, He is my Lord to-day."

II.

THE BEAUTIFUL CITY.

"Beautiful for situation."—*Psalms* xlviii. 2.

DAMASCUS is a truly typical Eastern city—Eastern dress of every colour is seen in the streets—veiled women, turbaned men, bazaars, quaint shops, old houses with marble fountains, courtyards with orange and lemon trees, sites of holy places—some certain, some very doubtful, as the street "Straight," the house of Ananias, the oak of Abraham. Many things combine to make Damascus one of the most interesting of ancient cities. From the time of Eliezer (*Genesis* xv. 2) until to-day, the world's news has been discussed in its bazaars and at its gate. Empires have risen and fallen, but the capital of Syria remains, and to-day contains 150,000 inhabitants.

Within, Damascus, like all Eastern cities, is full of dirt and uncleanness. The dogs are the only scavengers, and they prowl about the lanes and bye-ways, and make night hideous with their howlings. From without, as we have seen, Damascus is indeed beautiful—its praise has been sung generation after generation.

Mohamet, when he came as a donkey boy from Mecca, and first beheld it, said, "Man can have but *one* Paradise, and as I look for the heavenly, I will not enter the earthly one."

Thirty miles of gardens stretch far and wide. Peaches and apricots grow in abundance, and when in blossom form a garland of flowers round the city. Fair, indeed, is this ancient Damascus: "The eye of the East," "The handful of gold in its goblet of emerald," as the Eastern writers have called it.

But, oh, how sad it is to think of all the ignorance within! How few know about our Blessed Saviour. What hatred is there towards those who bear His Name! In the year 1860 no less than 3000 Christians were put to death within its walls. Damascus is like some of those tombs we saw in the Moham-medan burying-ground—white without, but within full of dead men's bones.

Dear children, what is beauty? Beauty is the sacrament of goodness; it is the outward sign of what is within.

Be not proud, then, of your eyes, or hair, or cheeks; if they

are beautiful, God has made them so. See to it that you are not like Damascus, beautiful only without—cross, fretful, impatient, discontented within. Let your character be beautiful, let your life be true and pure, so will many love you, so will you grow up to be a blessing to many; and when your cheek grows pale, and your eyes dim with age, and your hair has lost all its golden tints, you will be beautiful in His sight Who sees not as man sees, but reads the secrets of the heart.

"The King's daughter is all glorious within"—

"Blest are the pure in heart,
For they shall see our God;
The secret of the Lord is theirs,
Their soul is Christ's abode."

III.

THE STREET CRIES.

"I counsel thee to buy of Me."

Revelation iii. 18.

THE bazaars, or the streets of shops, in Damascus are full of interest. Here we see the merchant, or shopkeeper, sitting cross-legged among his wares, probably smoking his long pipe, called a hookah.

The silversmiths' bazaar is full of precious stores; here the merchantman weighs his articles in scales before he sells them to his customer.

But, besides these regular sellers of their goods, you see men walking up and down, and calling out in strange words which you cannot understand. Who are these? These, too, are sellers of various articles. Here comes one; he has sweetcakes, and he cries, "Buy, buy, buy of me." Here is another, with a water-skin, and he cries, "Ho! ye thirsty, drink." While here is yet a third; what does he call out? and why do so many throng around? "Lo, the distribution; lo, the distribution!" is his invitation. This is a custom called "Sebil." A rich man has bought the cool drink of this lemon-seller, and he is to give it away to all who need.

There is One who comes unseen into this our world, in which you and I live, and He, too, cries like those street sellers in

Damascus: "Buy, buy. I counsel thee, buy of Me." Who is this? It is the Lord Jesus—our risen, ascended Lord.

He cries, "I counsel thee, buy of Me gold, white raiment, eye-salve."

Not real gold, but that which will make you really rich—"the riches of His grace," which will supply your every-day needs.

Not real raiment, a new dress for Sunday. But the pure, white, clean heart, and the beautiful holy life. For the white clothing means the righteousness of God's children.

Not real eye-salve. But something which will give sight to your soul, and make you know more clearly about Jesus and His love, and His way in which He would have you walk.

Do you sometimes feel sad because you have been naughty, cross, selfish, proud, or disobedient? Then hear your dear Lord cry, "Ye thirsty one, come to Me and be satisfied. Ho! the distribution. What I give is free, without money and without price."

"I heard the voice of Jesus say,
Behold I freely give
The living water, thirsty one;
Stoop down and drink and live.
I came to Jesus and I drank
Of that life-giving stream;
My thirst was quenched, my soul revived,
And now I live in Him."

IV.

THE FIRST DAY'S RIDE.

"It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks."—*Acts ix. 5.*

AGAIN and again do we look back upon the beautiful city, for we are leaving it, never probably to see it again. Lovely does it look in the early morning sunshine, with its white blossoms, its minarets, and its palm trees.

What a charm is there about that first ride; how everything is new and strange. We pass an ass laden with thorns; what can these be for? we ask; and then of course we are reminded of the text, "Or ever your pots be made hot with thorns," and we know these are for kindling the fire.

We pass a field of young wheat: we see the hard pathway,

and the stony ground, and the thorns growing in abundance, and we realise as never before that first Parable of our Lord Jesus.

We have just turned to have our last look at the city, when lo! what is this? A man ploughing. *One* hand guides that simple rough wooden plough, telling us how accurate the Master was when he said, "No man having put his *hand* to the plough and looking back is fit for the Kingdom of God." The other hand holds the goad with which he pricks the oxen.

Now turn to the ninth chapter of the Acts. We are probably on the very spot where Saul fell to the ground, just in view of the beautiful city.

"It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." Was a man ploughing there that eventful day, 1855 years ago? We cannot say. But the *goad* taught Saul a lesson, and it can teach you and me a lesson to-day.

The oxen find it hard, and in fact of no use to kick against the goad, the sharp iron point at the end of a long stick of wood. Saul found it was of no use to kick against that sharp stinging conscience which had pricked him ever since he had seen that face of the First Martyr, "like the face of an angel." It was no use fighting against that still small voice within which *would* be heard, "Saul, you are wrong;" "Saul, these Christians are in the right;" "Saul, if you persecute these, you offend your God."

Hard work did Saul find it to kick against conscience.

Have you never tried to stop a little voice within you? Have you never resisted conscience? Have you never done what you knew to be wrong when that voice said: "Stop! this must not be?"

"It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks."

Conscience is the voice of the Holy Ghost. He speaks by conscience; see, then, that you fight not against God—but, hearing Him, obey.

"And His that gentle voice we hear,
Soft as the breath of even,
That checks each fault, that calms each fear,
And speaks of Heaven.

And every virtue we possess,
And every conquest won,
And every thought of holiness,
Are His alone."







